

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7319

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 3258

EO 11652: XGDS-4

TAGS: PFOR, BG, IN

SUBJ: BANGALEE REACTION TO INDIAN EMERGENCY

BEGIN GDS: SUMMARY: WHILE THE BDG HAS MADE NO COMMENT ON THE PROCLAMATION OF EMERGENCY AND SUBSEQUENT EVENTS IN INDIA BUT HAS ALLOWED THE CONTROLLED PRESS TO COMMENT APPROVINGLY, THE REACTION AMONG THOUGHTFUL BANGALEES IS ONE OF GROWING CONCERN AS THEY PONDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF POSSIBLY UNPREDICTABLE CHANGE IN INDIA. END SUMMARY.

1. THE REACTION IN BANGLADESH TO THE PROCLAMATION OF EMERGENCY IN INDIA AND THE EVENTS WHICH HAS FOLLOWED THAT ACTION APPEARS TO BE ONE OF INCREASING UNEASINESS. THE BDG HAS NOT, OF COURSE, OFFERED ANY FORMAL COMMENT. MOREOVER, AS KAISER MURSHED, DIRECTOR-GENERAL FOR SUB-CONTINENT IN MFA, PUT IT, "WHAT'S HAPPENING IN INDIA IS AN INTERNAL AFFAIR ABOUT WHICH WE CAN SAY NOTHING." HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT BANGLADESH REQUIRES A STABLE INDIA, FEARING THAT IT WILL INEVITABLY BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY ANY WEAKENING OF THE GOI'S ABILITY TO GOVERN EFFECTIVELY.

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2. IF THE BDG HAS BEEN SILENT, THE PRESS HAS OFFERED

COMMENT. THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER ON JUNE 27 CHARACTERIZED THE IMPOSITION OF THE EMERGENCY AS "APPROPRIATE" GIVEN WHAT IS SAW AS THE CHALLENGE PRESENTED BY THE NON-CPI OPPOSITION TO "POLITICAL PEACE, COMMUNAL HARMONY AND ECONOMIC STABILITY IN THE SUBCONTINENT..." THE BANGLADESH TIMES THE FOLLOWING DAY IN AN EDITORIAL ENTITLED "THE RIGHT STEP" COMMENTED THAT THE GOI HAD "...OBVIOUSLY NO OTHER CHOICE, NO ALTERNATIVE WHATSOEVER BUT TO GO FOR FIRM ACTION TO SAVE THE COUNTRY FROM POLITICAL TURMOIL AND SAVE DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS..." THE APPROVING TONE OF THESE EDITORIALS WAS PARALLELED BY THE REPORTAGE IN ALL PAPERS. MOST OF THE ACCOUNTS WERE FROM THE INDIAN WIRE SERVICES AND NONE CONTAINED MATERIAL WHICH MIGHT QUESTION THE ACTIONS OF MRS. GANDHI AND HER GOVERNMENT. MOREOVER, PROMINENCE WAS GIVEN TO COMMENTS BY SUCH BAKSAL STAWARTS AS SHEIKH FAZLUL HUG MONI AND SHEIKH SHAHIDUL ISLAM WHO OFFERED SUPPORT TO MRS. GNADHI'S ASSERTION THAT HER GOVERNMENT CONFRONTED A RIGHTIST CONSPIRACY WITH EXTERNAL INSPIRATION. (SHEIKH MONI'S TIMES, AS WELL AS THE OBSERVER, DID HOWEVER CARRY DCI COLBY'S "MEET THE PRESS" DENIAL OF ANY CIA INVOLVEMENT.) SINCE THE PRESS HAS BEEN UNDER THE THUMB OF THE BDG SINCE JUNE 17, ITS COMMENT AND COVERAGE REFLECTS THE OFFICIAL LINE.

3. IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF THE DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY, NUMEROUS BANGALEES SOMEWHAT FRIVOLOUSLY REMINDED ONE ANOTHER, AND ANY FOREIGNER AVAILABLE, OF A REMARK ATTRIBUTED TO GOPAL KRISHNA GOKHALE, MODERATE CONGRESS LEADER AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS CENTURY, WHO SAID "WHAT BENGAL THINKS TODAY, INDIA THINKS TOMORROW." HOWEVER, AS THE CHARACTER OF EVENTS IN INDIA BECAME INCREASINGLY CLEAR, MORE SOBER NOTE BEGAN TO EMERGE. DEDICATED BAKSAL MEMBERS WILL OCCASIONALLY ASSERT THAT WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN INDIA HAS OFFERED THOROUGH JUSTIFICATION FOR THE PROFOUND CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL CHANGES WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE OR ARE IN PROCESS HERE. HOWEVER, OTHERS WHOSE FORTUNES ARE LESS DEPENDENT ON THOSE OF SHEIKH MUJIB EXPRESS DEEP CONCERN. SOME, IF FAR FROM ALL OF THESE, ARE

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TROUBLED BY THE THREAT THEY PERCIEVE TO INDIA'S DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS. THEY HAVE LOOKED TO INDIA AS AN EXEMPLAR WHICH WOULD SUSTAIN THEIR DESIRE FOR AND COULD INSPIRE A RETURN TO MORE REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT IN BANGLADESH.

4. THE MORE GENERAL RESPONSE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IDEOLOGY. THIS REFLECTS A GROWING CONCERN THAT EVENTS

HAVE BEEN SET IN MOTION IN INDIA WHICH CANNOT BE EASILY REVERSED OR EVEN HALTED. IN LIGHT OF THE LIMITED NEWS FLOWING FROM INDIA, THEY FEAR THAT THE GOI'S PROTESTATIONS THAT THE SITUATION IS UNDER CONTROL MAY BE FALSE. AS IN THE CASE OF MURSHED, THEIR CONCERN IS FOR THE STABILITY OF INDIA. THEY WOULD NOT WORRY ABOUT INSTABILITY IN INDIA IF IT HAD NO EFFECT BEYOND ITS BORDERS. (THEY MIGHT EVEN WELCOME IT IF THEY THOUGHT IT WOULD REDUCE THE PERCEIVED THREAT OF INDIAN HEGEMONY.) HOWEVER, THEY ARE FAR FROM CONVINCED THAT IS CONSEQUENCES CAN BE CONTAINED AND THUS SEE A SERIOUSLY DESTABILIZED INDIA AS PERILOUS FOR BANGLADESH. FEW SEEM ANXIOUS TO HAVE MRS. GANDHI FALL, CONCLUDING THAT SHE HAS ALREADY DEMONSTRATED GOODWILL TOWARD BANGLADESH. IN CONTRAST, THE PROSPECTS OF A DESCENT INTO CHAOS OR A RADICAL CHANGE IN THE WIELDERS OF POWER IS VERY FRIGHTENING. AS ONE BANGALEE COMMENTED, "IF INDIA'S EMERGENCY DOES NOT WORK, OURS WON'T EITHER." END GDS.

5. BEGIN XGDS-4. THE INDIANS HERE IN DACCA APPEAR THEMSELVES TO BE AWARE OF AND ANXIOUS TO ALLAY BANGALEE FEARS. ANWAR HOSSAIN MANJU, UNTIL HIS OUSTER THE EDITOR ITTEFAG, TOLD AN EMOFF THAT ON THE EVENING OF JUNE 27 INDIAN DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER A.K. DAS HAD TELEPHONED TO SAY THAT HE MUST SEE HOSSAIN URGENTLY. WHEN HE ARRIVED, DAS SOUGHT TO EXPLAIN TO HOSSAIN THE RATIONAL FOR THE EMERGENCY, DESCRIBING THE THREAT CONFRONTING THE GOI AND OFFERING ASSURANCES THAT THE SITUATION WAS WELL IN HAND. WE HAVE HEARD OF NO OTHER SUCH INSTANCE BUT HAVE EVERY REASON TO THINK THAT OTHERS OF PROMINENCE EQUAL TO HOSSAIN WOULD HAVE BEEN CONTACTED IN SIMILAR FASHION. THE INDIANS CLEARLY RECOGNIZE THAT, AS MURSHED REMINDED US, "WHEN INDIA SNEEZES, BANGLADESH CONFIDENTIAL

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FEARS PNEUMONIA." END XGDS-4.  
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